

at large, so what do you have to say about international terrorism and all the——

The President. You mean about bin Ladin still being at large? Well, we're doing our part to change it. And I hope we'll be successful.

Interest Rates

Q. Mr. President, on the economy, are you afraid the Fed's going to raise the rate in response to the numbers?

The President. Well, I think that these numbers have to be seen in terms of yesterday's numbers. Yesterday's inflation figures were quite encouraging, and I think they show that—core inflation at something like 2.4 percent, and I think the overall inflation rate will come back toward that, now that the oil prices are moderating. So I think that should be quite encouraging, not just to the Fed but to all Americans and to American business—that basically the productivity of the work force, continuing to be fueled by information technology, has en-

abled us to have an amazing amount of growth and low unemployment, at quite modest levels of inflation. And so that's encouraging to me, and I think the facts speak for themselves on that.

Thank you.

Vieques Island, Puerto Rico

Q. What did you think of the Vieques operation?

The President. Well, it went pretty well, I think. They did a good job.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:12 p.m. on the South Grounds at the White House, prior to his departure for Farmington, PA. In his remarks, he referred to Wayne LaPierre, executive vice president, National Rifle Association; and Usama bin Ladin, who allegedly sponsored the 1998 bombing attacks on the U.S. Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania.

Statement on the Bureau of Labor Statistics Employment Report May 5, 2000

Today we have further proof of the continued strength of our economy. With the announcement of 3.9 percent unemployment, we have broken the 4 percent barrier for the first time in three decades. Over the last 7 years, our Nation has created 21 million new jobs and cut the unemployment rate nearly in half. This is more than a symbolic milestone in the longest and strongest economic expansion in history. It shows that our strategy of fiscal discipline is working for all Americans. We have the lowest unemployment for African-Americans and His-

panics on record, the lowest unemployment for women in more than 40 years, and strong wage growth among all income groups.

The American people deserve credit for this historic achievement. And they have made it clear that we should stay on the path of fiscal discipline, debt reduction, and targeted investments in our people. We should not adopt risky tax cuts that would derail our hard won prosperity. We have a responsibility to maintain the fiscal discipline that got us here.

Statement on the Northern Ireland Peace Process May 5, 2000

I am greatly encouraged that Prime Ministers Blair and Ahern have announced that their intensive talks in Belfast over the past 2 days have made progress, providing a sound basis for restoring the political institutions and achiev-

ing full implementation of the Good Friday accord. I urge the parties and paramilitary organizations to seize this opportunity to realize these goals in order to secure lasting peace for the

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people of Northern Ireland. The United States remains prepared to assist in any way we can.

NOTE: The statement referred to Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom and Prime Minister Bertie Ahern of Ireland.

Memorandum on Reducing the Risk of *Listeria Monocytogenes*

May 5, 2000

*Memorandum for the Secretary of Agriculture,
the Secretary of Health and Human Services*

*Subject: Reducing the Risk of Listeria
Monocytogenes*

Food safety is a vital issue for all Americans. When people across this country sit down to a meal at home or in a restaurant, they expect that the food they eat will be safe. While the U.S. food supply is abundant, the marketplace has evolved from one dominated by minimally processed basic commodities for home preparation to one with an array of highly processed products that are ready-to-eat or require minimal preparation in the home.

To take account of the changes in the way Americans eat and to ensure that America's food supply remains safe, my Administration has made wide-ranging, dramatic improvements in food safety. We have worked successfully to revolutionize our meat and poultry inspection system, instituting scientific testing and pathogen reduction controls to target and reduce dangerous pathogens like *Salmonella* and *E. coli* O157:H7 and the illnesses they cause. We also have implemented an innovative system of preventative controls for the seafood industry, published industry guidance to improve the safety of fruits and vegetables, and taken steps to prevent unsafe imported foods from reaching American consumers. My Food Safety Initiative is now in its third year of improving food safety surveillance, outbreak response, education, research, and inspection. In 1998, I issued an Executive Order creating the President's Council on Food Safety (Council), which oversees Federal food safety research efforts and is currently developing a comprehensive, national food safety strategic plan. It is under the Council's auspices that my Administration produced last year an Egg Safety Action Plan with the goal of eliminating illnesses from *Salmonella Enteritidis* in eggs. Additionally, we launched a high-tech early warning system called PulseNet that uses DNA-

fingerprinting techniques to help us better detect and prevent outbreaks of foodborne illness.

These and other efforts have helped to make meaningful improvements in food safety. But we can do even more. Millions of Americans get sick from eating contaminated food each year. With changing patterns of food production and consumption, we must continue to aggressively meet the food safety challenges of the 21st century.

One challenge we must address immediately is that of *Listeria monocytogenes*, which can cause a severe infection called listeriosis. Listeriosis is a significant public health concern, and is especially lethal, resulting in death in about 20 percent of cases. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that 2,518 persons become ill and 504 persons die each year from listeriosis. Pregnant women with listeriosis can pass the infection on to their unborn children, potentially resulting in severe illness or death to the fetus or newborn infant. Others at high risk for severe disease or death are the elderly and those with weakened immune systems. Ready-to-eat food products, such as lunch meats, smoked fish, certain types of soft cheeses, and hot dogs, are among the foods most commonly associated with food-related illness from *Listeria*. To address this serious public health problem, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), in cooperation with the Department of Agriculture (USDA), is conducting a risk assessment on *Listeria monocytogenes* to determine which foods warrant further preventive measures. This risk assessment will be completed shortly, and I believe we must build on what is already being done to target this deadly organism.

My Administration's goal—articulated in our Healthy People 2010 plan—is to cut the number of illnesses caused by *Listeria* in half by 2010, from 0.5 cases to 0.25 cases per 100,000. To meet and exceed this goal, I hereby direct you,